I: Hart & Pilling E-5 (1928-1954) 1960
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observe the spontaneous gesture with which men, on leaving the Mission, automatically threw off their loincloths at the Mission fence and headed for the bush as naked as the day they were born. Women, in pre-white days, habitually carried a piece of bark which they held in front of themselves whenever they met a male. As soon as string or rope was introduced by the early white contacts, the women found it more convenient to tie some sort of band around their waists and double the piece of bark over this waistband. This was much handier since it left the hands free, but the bark, being stiff and unsecured, was at best a very capricious covering, and old women in the midst of public arguments often tore off their aprons and threw them at their opponents as a gesture of contempt.

Young women were more decorous and fussed modestly with their bark aprons when young men were present rather in the same way as American coeds fuss with their skirts in crowded classrooms. Theoretically, young women were supposed never to meet either young men or men outside their own household, and so the bark apron, carried in the hand, was in aboriginal times merely something to have in case of emergency. It was noticeable in Tiwi ceremonies that when the women danced, they did nothing with their hands. We think this was because, in pre-white days, their right hands, at least, were needed to hold their bark aprons in front of their pubic regions, since at dances they were in the presence of strange men.

This brief account of the daily and yearly life of the Tiwi households enables us to draw a few important conclusions about their economic life:

1. Compared with many of the mainland tribes, the Tiwi were economically rather well-off, in that the bigger household units were usually able to produce a food surplus.

2. This food surplus varied directly with the number of working wives that a household head possessed.

3. A household head with many wives was therefore, in Tiwi terms, a wealthy man who could retire entirely from the food quest and devote his time to other activities.

4. Such men were able to devote full time to other activities such as manufacturing useful and ceremonial objects and participation in ceremonial affairs and public life.

5. Wealthy men, active in one or all of these pursuits, were the "big men" of the tribe. In each band there were two or three such men, and in the whole tribe perhaps less than twenty had attained full success or were ranked by public opinion as being the most admired and influential. The next chapter examines the career patterns by which every male Tiwi sought to become, and a few succeeded in becoming, a big man.

2: Mountford E-5 (1954) 1958
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[88] had worn continuously their curious ornaments, *mariguani* (Pl. 420),[81]
[301] around their necks as well as many cane and bark ornaments on their arms. During the whole of that period (about five months) they renewed their body paint continuously. They were not allowed, however, to scratch their heads with their hands, but must use for that purpose a special pointed stick, *murubunga* (Pl. 32F).

The rituals began when one of the *Mikingulas*, coming up behind the male
[302] *Kilipaniati*, cut the *mariguani* from the neck of the initiate, poured water over him to remove his body paint, and decorated him with the design of a *W'adjeniati* (Pl. 421H). Similarly, the husband of the female initiate cut her neck ornament, washed her and redecorated her as a *W'adjeniatinga*. After eating their store of cycad fruit, these new initiates resumed the normal life of the tribe.

About mid-November, thunder and other signs of the oncoming wet season are signals for the *Marukumuni* to discard the design he has been wearing since the ceremonial eating of the cycad fruit. As soon as this hap-
[301] pens the men paint another design on his body (Pl. 421D), put new cockatoo
[302] feathers in his hair, and many cane armlets on his arms. The initiate wears these decorations, continuously renewing his body paint, until the ceremonial eating of the edible yam, which takes place at the beginning of the *kulama* ceremony about four months later.

3. THE KULAMA CEREMONY

(1) *Collecting and Eating the Edible Yams*

Toward the end of January, when the wet season was approaching its climax, the *kulama* leader instructed the women to go into the jungle, locate a number
[262] of the young plants of two species of edible yams, a long one, *juruguni*, and a short one, *karawani* and show them to him so that he would know when they would be ready to eat.

When some weeks later, the leader estimated that the yams were fit for digging and the tall, annual grass was about to shed its seed, he called the people together and told them that the *kulama* rituals would start in a few days.[82]

[81] Spencer, 1928, Pl. ix, No. 4, illustrates a *mariguani*.

[82] From the time of this announcement until the finish of the *kulama* ceremony, no
[834] fully initiated man, must sleep with his wife. If he does, he will be attacked by *teini*, the mysterious *kulama* sickness, and die. I did not find out the characteristics of the *kulama* sickness.